

# Mental Development

According to Buddhism there are two illnesses which are physical illness and mental illness. The Buddha says there are some people those who are healthy physically and live for hundred years, but it is very difficult to find who are healthy mentally except the *Arahants* who are enlightened.

The nature of our physical body is that it is subject to decay, illness and death. We are unable to control this nature. Though we try, it is difficult to control our physical illnesses. However, if we know the path of purification of mind, we can control our mind, and can attain health mentally, though we are subject to physical problems. If someone can overcome material world cultivating mind, when the material world changes, he is able to keep his mind unshaken. The Buddha kindly says that as an intelligent person the highest qualities that someone can practice are tranquility (*Samata*) and wisdom (*Vipassanā*). If he can keep his mind always in tranquility and wisdom, he is the fortunate person in this world because he has overcome suffering at the moment. If someone is confident in the Buddha's enlightenment, he has to practice this path for inner peace.

Buddhism always points out the path of inner peace. Our inner peace depends on reducing defilements which disturb our peace of mind. Here first of all we should recognize real enemies who disturb and steal our peace of mind.

The Supreme Buddha explains how we are successful in our life. Our success depends on happiness. Happiness depends on how far we have reduced evil thoughts which steal our inner peace from our mind. That is why the Buddha says **purifying one's mind** (*sacittapariyodapanam etam buddhānasāsanam*) as an advice given by all the Buddhas.

According to Buddhism, there are three main unwholesome roots which cause to arise evil thoughts in our mind. They are;

1. Craving (*Lobha*)
2. Anger (*Dosa*)
3. Delusion (*Moha*)

If someone's mind is polluted with these three unwholesome mental states, his mind is impure, and his physical, verbal and mental activities are also evil and incorrect. Then we have no real peace or happiness although we are well educated, rich or beautiful. In this situation all our wealth and education are useless. Hence, we need to overcome these evil mental states as much as we can if we need to attain peace. Here, it is very essential to know how to overcome these negative thoughts.

First, the Buddha describes how to reduce craving and anger in the primary level. Practicing generosity is one of the primary techniques that we can practice to overcome craving. Also, contemplating on impurity of the physical body parts is the other technique to overcome lustful desire.

Practicing loving kindness is a technique to decrease anger which is one of the main reasons that we suffer. When we contemplate on May all beings be well, happy, comfortable and peaceful! again and again as a meditation gradually our mind is purified from anger.

Among above three unwholesome roots, delusion or ignorance is the strongest defilement. The rate of craving and anger depends on the rate of delusion. When delusion decreases craving and anger automatically decrease. On the path of reducing delusion, three stages should be followed.

They are;

1. Knowledge
2. Reflection
3. Practice as morality, concentration and wisdom

Knowledge means knowing the path of liberation through listening to the Buddha's message. Here, it is very important to know the dependent co-origination which the heart of Buddhism is. Reflection means wise investigation according to what we listened in the name of deliverance path what the Buddha taught. Practice means following the path through our life as morality, virtue and wisdom.

One day a deity came to the Buddha and asked a question how to overcome mental problems.

A tangle inside, a tangle outside,  
This society is entangled in a tangle.  
I ask you this, O *Gotama*,  
Who can disentangle this tangle?

There, the Buddha explains the path how to reduce mental problems.

A man established on virtue, wise,  
Developing the mind and wisdom,  
A bhikkhu ardent and discreet:  
He can disentangle this tangle.

According to this answer, the Buddha says he who is wise should practice virtue, concentration and wisdom to overcome tangles.

The main difference of Buddhism, when other religions and philosophies are compared, is the theory of cause and effect, the dependent origination. All other religions, philosophies and sciences explain their teachings and theories depending on conventional truth. According to the conventional truth, before we experience there was a world, and also after our experience the world remains. According to the dependent origination in Buddhism where the ultimate truth is explained before we experience there was no world and also after our experience the world doesn't remain. The experience or the world arises and ceases as the result of whether the conditions are together or separated.

When our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind contact with external objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, mental formations, the experience arises at the moment. Simultaneously, five aggregates arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind. Five aggregates are: matter (*Rupa* - රූප), feelings (*Vedanā* - වේදනා), perception (*Saññā* - සංකල්පනා), mental formations (*Sankhāra* - සංඛාර) and consciousness (*Viññāna* - විඤ්ඤාණ). Five aggregates are always together. They can't be separated. They could be realized by wisdom. These five aggregates are the bottom line of all our experiences which we receive through our senses. The nature of these five aggregates is that they weren't here

before the experience. And also, they won't remain after the experience. Understanding of the dependent origination directly focuses on comprehension of five aggregates. The Buddha advises everyone who are in every spiritual level to reflect on five aggregates as arising, ceasing, enjoyment, danger and liberation. Every moment five aggregate arise when conditions are together. Also, they immediately cease when conditions separate. There is an enjoyment in these five things, but enjoyment is less, danger is a lot. That is why the wise person should find liberation from five aggregates. The Buddha says the highest education that a wise person should gain is the comprehension of five aggregates.

As a result of the union of the five aggregates, when factors are together, we have experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When factors (or conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. The highest intelligence in Buddhism is the intelligence that "Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence" (*Ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati* - අනුත්වා සම්භුතං හුත්වා න භවිස්සති). If we can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. This is the main teaching that the Buddha realized, discovered and preached to the world to get rid of suffering. The Buddha has explained this theory in various ways in his teachings like this;

When this is, that is (*Asmin sati idam hoti*)

This arising, that arises (*Imassa Uppādā idam uppajjati*)

When this is not, that is not (*Asmin asati idam na hoti*)

This ceasing, that ceases (*Imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati*)

Understanding of Buddhism depends on how far we have understood this theory, the dependent origination. If someone has a clear knowledge about the dependent origination, he is knowledgeable about suffering. Understanding of suffering causes us to understand the four noble truths. If someone knows the noble truth of suffering is as lack of knowledge of this theory, listening to what the Buddha taught he tries to understand the dependent origination, five aggregates and four noble truths as much as he can. And also, he always tries to practice the path to get rid of suffering. Here he has to practice three disciplines. They are;

1. Virtue (*Sīla*)
2. Tranquility (*Samādhi*)
3. Wisdom (*Paññā*)

First of all, he disciplines his physical and verbal actions with the knowledge of the dependent origination. Having a good discipline in speech and behavior, he gradually trains his mind in tranquility by practicing concentration meditation. Because of his clear knowledge about the process how suffering arises with concentrated mind, he reflects on impermanence. Here he always reflects on arising and ceasing of the five aggregates. As much as he can examine, his ignorance gradually decreases. Simultaneously, arising of other parts of dependent origination of his life also decreases. As the result of practicing this path, suffering gradually decreases. He always tries to live with virtue and concentration, seeing insight as impermanence.

At the very beginning on this spiritual path we have to be honest, intelligent and kind. To achieve the final bliss of liberation or enlightenment, we have to listen to the Buddha's message with good attention for our knowledge. At the very first level in Buddhism the knowledge is very important. Buddhism compares knowledge as wealth (*Suta Dhanam*). To achieve all kinds of results such as intelligence that Buddhism teaches, knowledge plays a major role. It is not that only knowledge is enough but reflecting on it again and again is also very important. Furthermore, we have to practice it in our daily life as morality (*Sīla*) and meditation (*Bhāvanā*) to see the results in our life. Meditation is further divided into two as tranquility (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation. All doctrines that focus on liberation can be included in three steps those are discipline, tranquility and wisdom. Once the Buddha included his entire message in mindfulness. That is why he says **"practicing mindfulness is the only way for purification of beings, practicing mindfulness is the only way to overcome sorrow and lamentation, mindfulness is the only way to getting rid of suffering, mindfulness is the only way to achieve wisdom, mindfulness is the only way to attain enlightenment."** Thus, the Buddha has kindly pointed out the importance of practicing mindfulness again and again for the liberation of beings.

1. The Noble Truth of unsatisfactoriness or Suffering (*Dukkha Sacca* - දුක්ඛ සත්‍යය)
2. The Noble Truth of the cause (origin) of unsatisfactoriness (*Samudaya Sacca* - සමුදය සත්‍යය)
3. The Noble Truth of the cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Nirodha Sacca* - නිරෝධ සත්‍යය)
4. The Noble Truth of the path that leads to get rid of unsatisfactoriness (*Magga Sacca* - මග්ග සත්‍යය)

The Satipatthāna Sutta deals with the fourfold development of 'Sati', mindfulness and 'Patthāna', establishment or practice. So 'Satipatthāna' means establishment of mindfulness. The main purpose of practicing mindfulness is to investigate what happens to our mind and body and finally understanding our whole life. If we can clearly understand the process of our life as it is, we can overcome all sufferings in our day to day life and in whole Sansāric journey.

Here it is said the four types of areas where we practice mindfulness. They are;

- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of the body (*Kāyānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of sensation or feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind (*Cittānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind-objects (*Dhammānupassanā*)

According to practicing mindfulness in these four areas, our attention and awareness are gradually developed about our body and mind. And we practice to live in the present moment consciously. We mostly suffer because of the past or the future. If we lose our attention with mindfulness about the present, it means we lose our happiness. That is why Buddhism emphasizes the importance of developing mindfulness.

As the result of practicing mindfulness with the understanding of the dependent origination, wisdom or right vision gradually increases. The nature of wisdom is to reduce desire, anger and all other defilements which disturb peace of mind. Whenever someone lives in mindfulness, he is away from suffering. Living in mindfulness is like living in the field of the father, the Buddha. On the other

hand, whenever we are unhappy, it means we are away from mindfulness and in the field of the Mara, devil. Therefore, living in mindfulness is the real protection in our life.

Wisdom or intelligence, which mainly helps us to overcome suffering and attain liberation from defilements, is highly praised in Buddhism. The main cause whether we are happy is the level of our wisdom. Our real success depends on how much we have achieved wisdom. Hence, wisdom has been compared to a Gem of Men (පඤ්ඤා නරානං රතන). Wisdom brings purification (පඤ්ඤාය පරිසුඡිකම්බනී). There is no other bright light like wisdom (නත්ථි පඤ්ඤා සමා ආභා). Wisdom is used in several terms in Pali language such as Sammā Ditti (සම්මා දිට්ඨි), paññā (පඤ්ඤා), Amoha (අමෝහ). Wisdom can be developed from the beginning to the maximum level in the path of enlightenment. Therefore, Buddhism always guides us to gain wisdom through all kinds of advices that the supreme Buddha explained in his entire life. The Buddha says; living on a day seeing impermanence is better than living hundred years without seen this reality.

As the result of the development of the three characteristics, the intelligent person depends on his wisdom, not on external people or things or his ordinary shaken mind, and he makes a stable refuge throughout practicing Dhamma. This is the perfect security that we can achieve in our lifetime. In this spiritual development, someone can live without anger among the people those who are angry. Also, he lives without greed among greedy people.

**Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge;  
dwell with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.**

*Atta deepā bhikkhave viharatha atta saranā na añña saranā,  
Dhamma deepā bhikkhave dhamma saranā na añña saranā.*



**May the Triple Gem Bless you!**

**තෙරුවන් සරණයි!**

**May all Beings be Well, Happy, Comfortable and Peaceful!**

**වෙත්වා සවිසත හැමකල් නිදහසි!**

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